

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina Office of the Governor

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NCDOT AND DENR WIN NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

RALEIGH – At a special ceremony today in Washington, D.C. honoring Earth Day, state Transportation Secretary Lyndo Tippet and Secretary Bill Ross of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources were presented a national award for their unprecedented partnership to deliver transportation projects while improving North Carolina's environment.

Presented by Federal Highway Administrator Mary Peters, the Environmental Leadership Award recognizes outstanding transportation projects, processes and people who incorporate environmental stewardship into their transportation programs. Ceremonies were held at the U.S. Department of Transportation building.

"This recognition attests to the progress we are making here in North Carolina for our highways, our environment and our citizens," Gov. Mike Easley said. "By working together, we are balancing the needs of our urban and rural road systems with the needs of protecting and preserving our environment.

"As part of my agenda for *One North Carolina*, I challenged my cabinet to work together to ensure that our environment will continue to be a place where our people and natural resources thrive," Easley said. "I compliment Secretary Tippet and Secretary Ross, their leadership teams and their departments for all their hard work and effort."

NCDOT and DENR were specifically honored for their successful partnership based on mutual support for environmental stewardship and responsible and timely transportation decision-making. This partnership led to the creation of a senior leadership team made up of the secretaries and two deputy secretaries from each department, who meet monthly to discuss strategic issues about transportation and the environment.

This leadership team, which is the first of its kind in the nation, has overseen improvements in the environmental permit approval process, air quality programs and landmark wildlife conservation — serving as a model for interagency partnerships for environmental stewardship and streamlining.

"Since my appointment two years ago, I have made protection of the environment a top priority," Secretary Tippet said. "With this aim in mind, our leadership team has focused every attention on strengthening our relationship with DENR. This prestigious award is a direct result of our common vision and serves as solid proof that it is possible to build a transportation system that protects and enhances our state's precious natural resources."

"The partnership between NCDOT and DENR has been crucial to the success of several state environmental stewardship and streamlining activities," Secretary Ross said. "Through this effort, we were able to identify the most problematic permitting issues and focus our energy on areas where we could achieve the most beneficial results such as wetlands mitigation."

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